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CHAPTER VI

THE INQUEST DIVISION  
OF THE GUGB NKVD USSR

Diagram No 10

It has already been mentioned above that the work of the NKVD organs is based on four principal foundations: operative recording, agents, operative technique and inquest. To avoid a gap in the unity of exposition, we place the analysis of structure and principles of work of the NKVD inquest organs immediately after the analysis of structure and functions of the 1st and 2nd Special Division and previously to the study of the activity and structure of purely operative agencies of the NKVD.

First of all, let us call to our mind that by a normal legal procedure the inquest is the preliminary stage for the exposure of the circumstances of the crime and for the establishment of the identity of persons who might have possibly committed it, and the conclusions of the investigator are in no way obligatory for the decision of the court. The investigator cannot take part in the proceedings of the court or influence them in any way. The body of the crime has to be irrefutably proved, and only under this condition the verdict of guilty may be passed. Furthermore, the court cannot be influenced only by indirect proofs and evidences when passing in a verdict. An inward conviction of the jury that the accused really committed a certain crime, not substantiated by any proofs, cannot be a reason, sufficient for passing a sentence. These elementary rules of legal procedure are obligatory for judicial organs of normal countries but not for those of the Soviet Union.

In order to understand the role of Soviet inquest organs and methods of their work, it is necessary to dwell upon the principles of judicial proofs in the Soviet law. The most detailed consideration of this problem is found in the book of the

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former Attorney General of the USSR, now Minister of Foreign Affairs A.Y. Vishinsky "Theory of Judicial Proofs in the Soviet Law" (first edition - Moscow, 1941; second - 1946). Vishinsky was awarded the Stalin premium of the first grade (200,000 rubles) and the title of the regular member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR for this work. This book served also as an initial point for the compilation of new criminal and civil codes of the USSR (this work was begun in 1947). Vishinsky does not set out any new standards or regulations in his work, but he lays down in very plain and precise terms the fundamental regulations of the Soviet legal procedure already used in practice.

These fundamental regulations may be briefly formulated as follows :

1. The Soviet jurisprudence is permeated by party-spirit and is based upon the Marxist-Leninist methodology.
2. The Soviet state (i.e. the Communist party) is the begetter of the Soviet court which is flesh and blood of the new Socialist society.
3. The inward conviction of the Soviet judges is connected with their socialist interpretation of the law, with their communist conception of law based upon the social-political world outlook of the working class. The sentence passed by the court is based upon this conviction of the judges, but this conviction has to be persuasive being supported by the Marxist-Leninist principles of the Soviet juridical science.
4. If there is a lack of direct proofs or if they are insufficient to state the body of the crime, the decisions of the Soviet court may be based upon indirect proofs or evidences.

These four regulations make the Soviet court a simple tool of the ruling party, one of the organs of the Stalinist dictatorship. The Soviet court may condemn a person even if the direct proofs of his guilt are lacking - and this is its principal peculiarity. Analysing numerous facts, purposely selected out of practice of Soviet courts, Vishinsky rather cynically states that if the indirect proofs are applied correctly, the court-

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this is mostly the case, - the inquest is not the preliminary but the final stage of the court-examination (if we can apply this name to the procedure, habitual in the USSR), and it concludes the process, that had its beginning in the operative recording and the so-called "elaboration of the figurant". The "notice" submitted by the investigator to the judgement of the "special board" usually encloses not only the material, provided by the inquest itself, but also the indictment and a suggestion as to the punitive measure, in the form of a certain paragraph of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR or some other Union Republic. The work of the "Special Council" usually consists only in approving of the investigator's conclusions or in the selection of some other clause of the Criminal-Political Code with the corresponding changes in the punitive measures. The "legal procedure" of the "troika" is even more simplified ( See chapter "Regional Organs of the NKVD").

Usually, in the practice of the NKVD work the operative part is not separated from the inquest ( especially at the periods of political campaigns and purges). One and the same NKVD operative worker begins the elaboration of the case, i.e. organizes the trailing after the "figurant", collects preliminary data and is very often charged with detenting of this person and making a search in his lodging. After the arrest of the "figurant" or of a group of persons involved into the same case, the operative worker is temporarily transferred to the inquest department. He personally makes the examination and, having completed the investigation, he reports on the case to the corresponding NKVD court. Having completed and closed the case, the operative worker returns again to his operative unit. This may be illustrated by the following example:

The operative recording of the 1st Special Division discloses a group of tsarist officers, noblemen and other "have beens" among the lecturers and professors of the Leningrad university. The "elaboration" of this group is entrusted to the operative

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agent-representative of the secret-political division of the Leningrad NKVD regional administration. He organizes the trailing, fixes the network of agents, succeeds in his efforts to secure the expulsion from the party of all persons who "wriggled" into the ranks of the Party, and finally arrests them as "enemies of the people".

Having completed all these preliminary stages, he is transferred to the inquest division of the Leningrad NKVD regional administration and starts to obtain from the arrestees such "confessions" of the crimes which seem to him to be the most suitable ones in this case. Having completed the investigation, he compiles a "reference notice" ("spravka") which is announced at the meeting of the "troika" of the Leningrad NKVD regional administration. Thereafter the case is considered to be closed, and the operative worker in question is again returned to his permanent work in the secret-political division. If the case is brought before the "Special Council", this operative agent-representative, having compiled a "notice" and the indictment, leaves for Moscow and personally reports his material at a meeting of the "Special Council" of the NKVD USSR.

Such an order of carrying on the investigation is especially favourable for the inequity, club-law and fabrication of false cases and forged accusations, as the operative agent-representative carrying on the lawsuit, is personally interested in condemning persons whom he has been "elaborating". This is a kind of a chain reaction and the only possible result is the conviction of all suspected persons.

Practically, a person is convicted already at the moment when his name appears on the registration card of the 1st Special Division. The only question is how long it will take to liquidate him and what forms will this liquidation assume. Having received the order for the "elaboration" of a certain person and being in possession of the data, provided by special recording, the agent-representative must obtain the confirmation of these materials,

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securing the conviction of his victim. Already when he starts working at the case, he is aware of the fact that if he does not get the required confirmation of the data, provided by special recording, the case will not be closed, but passed over to another NKVD man, and he himself will be recorded as a "complice" of this "figurant" and will be liquidated sooner or later.

Therefore the question of the real culpability of this man does not exist for the agent. He must be guilty, if the agent-representative wants to be safe and sound. The culpability of the "figurant" is a settled thing for the agent-representative already at the moment when the "elaboration" of this person is being entrusted to him. "The NKVD does not arrest for nothing" - such is the standard answer, given to all, trying to protest their relatives or intimates who got into trouble, and expressing a naive hope that it is only a mistake, a misunderstanding.

From the very beginning of the "elaboration", the suspected man becomes the personal enemy of the operative/agent-representative as the well-being and security of the later depend on the "success" of the elaboration. The Chekist-spy-investigator-judge persecutes his victim with the obstinacy and fury of a hound trying to hunt him down as soon as possible.

After the arrest of the "enemy of the people" the operative agent-representative assumes the role of the investigator, and he must prove that the arrest and all the accusations of the "figurant" have been justified, otherwise another NKVD man will be entrusted with the inquest, and this operative agent-representative will be punished in some way for his failure, at least losing his official position. In this stage he is not even interested in getting to the bottom of the matter: the accused has to be convicted and the difficulty lies only in the best "mounting" of the case. If several cases have been successfully mounted and their "form" was found to be adequate, this investigator, i.e. the operative agent-representative, will be promoted and rewarded; if the mounting is found to be poor, he will stay without promotion or

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will be even reduced to a lower rank. The NKVD-MGB releases its victims from its deadly grip only in those rare cases when the supreme party organs have some reasons for sending general instructions to reconsider cases of all persons, whose arrests have not been substantiated, and rehabilitate them. This happened, for instance, in 1939, when Beria replaced Yezhov on the post of the head of the NKVD.

The structure of the inquest division is comparatively simple and it reflects in general lines the structure of the NKVD-MGB operative agencies (See diagram No 10).

Each NKVD administration of division has the inquest section or the inquest branch which is subordinated both to this NKVD administration or division and to the inquest division of the center, in Moscow. It is more convenient to make an analysis of this structure using, as an example, the inquest ~~branch~~ <sup>branch</sup> of the NKVD regional administration. In this case the inquest branch is composed out of several sections, depending on the number of the operative divisions of this NKVD regional administration. Usually it consists of the following sections : 1st - Secretariat; 2nd - "serving" the Counter Intelligence Division (KRO); 3rd - serving the Secret-Political Division (SPO); 4th - serving the Economic Division (EKO), and 5th - serving the Special Division ("Osobiy Otdel").

Operative workers of each group of the inquest branch are divided in accordance with the number of operative sections accommodated by this inquest group. Thus in 1938-39 the 3rd group of the inquest branch of a large regional NKVD administration consisted at least out of 8 senior investigators, and was organized in such a way that one of them worked with the 1st section of the SPO, the other - with the 2nd etc. In such a way the investigators are specialized on cases of a similar type, and besides it is very helpful in respect to the conspiracy, for only one person is informed about all cases under the jurisdiction of this section.

Usually every section of the provincial inquest branch consists of only one senior investigator with the rank of an operative agent-representative, and of several investigators having the rank of assistant operative agents-representatives. But, as we have seen

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in the above mentioned example of a branch serving the Secret-Political Division (SPO), the number of senior investigators may be considerably increased depending on the attention paid to a certain operative division or administration of the NKVD. This example refers to the period when the essential attention of the Communist party and of the NKVD itself was drawn to the Secret-Political Administration.

The staffs of the branches in the central inquest division in Moscow are much more numerous and the investigators have higher ranks there. Besides, there is a special inquest branch serving the 1st Division of the NKVD USSR, i.e. considering the cases connected with the protection of the members of the Soviet Government, party leaders and the Kremlin.

Every central administration of the GUGB (now MGB) also has its own inquest section or inquest branch which is subordinated to the inquest division of the GUGB NKVD USSR. It consists of sub-sections which correspond to the division of this central administration of the GUGB. Thus, for example, the inquest section of the Economic Administration of the GUGB is composed of sub-sections concerned with oil industry, fishing trade etc.

### Inquest and Methods of Examination

We have already discussed above the particularities of the inquest in the NKVD practice. Its purpose is not the finding out of the fact, under which circumstances the real crime was committed, and not the ascertaining of the persons who have possibly committed that crime, but only the maintaining of decorum in the retribution of the arrested "enemy", who usually has to be liquidated only on the basis of some general instructions of higher Party organs and of the data of the operative recording and of his previous "elaboration" by the NKVD agents. In the overwhelming majority of cases the NKVD-MGB investigators succeed only in squeezing out of their victims the confessions about some crimes they intended to commit, but very seldom the arrestees admit that they have really committed these crimes.

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Formally, the NKVD investigators must stick to certain norms of the legal procedure, but practically they never adhere to them and nobody prevents them from applying any "methods of physical influence", i.e. tortures to their victims. The most horrid tortures the beating and tormenting of arrestees were always practiced by the Cheka-GPU-NKVD-MGB, but they achieved unheard-of dimensions at the times of Yezhov - this period is called the "Great Purge" abroad, but - the "yevovshina" in the Soviet Union. Yezhov's predecessor on the post of the NKVD People's Commissariat, Yagoda attached a very great importance to the operative technique and to the work with agents. He was an adherent of applying chiefly the psychological and not the physical methods of influence. Just when he was heading the NKVD, a masterly system of trailing, spying, blackmailing and provocations was set to work. He used to say that if the investigator beats or tortures an arrestee, he acknowledges his own utter inability of extorting a confession from this arestee by any other means. Of course it does not mean that at the times of Yagoda the NKVD investigators behaved like gentlemen with their victims: tortures and beatings always took place but they were not the only or the essential method.

All these "ceremonies with the enemies of the people" were completely rejected in the fearful period of the "Great Purge" and of Yezhov's reign. The deputy to the NKVD People's Commissar Zakovsky behaved with particular brutality. In 1937-38 he introduced a system of mass beatings and murders during the inquest. At the same time Zakovsky held the office of the Chief of the Moscow regional NKVD administration, while prior to that he had been heading for several years the NKVD administration of the Leningrad region. As an illustration of the inquest methods introduced by this dreadful man in Soviet punitive organs may serve the boastful declaration of Zakovsky himself, at a meeting of leading NKVD officials in Moscow, in 1938, that "in six weeks he contrived to draw a confession out of 11 thousands of spies in the Leningrad region". It is very significant that the horrid period of 1937-39, called "Yezhovshina" (Yezhov's reign) by the

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Soviet people, was usually nominated "Zakovshchina" in the Chekist circles.

By the end of this period the number of arrestees was so great, that no spy-work of agents ("agenturnaya rabota") was possible before the beginning of the inquest in prison. People were arrested by hundreds only on the basis of the data of operative recording or as a result of a libel, squeezed out of some prisoner by means of horrid tortures. For several years an ignorant, cruel and dull investigator became the "NKVD God" while the leg of a chair, the handle of a revolver or simply a boot or a fist, combined with dirtiest swearing and most fearful insults were his "methods of inquest". When "softhearted" Beria replaced Yezhov, he declared : " it is not forbidden to beat, and it is necessary to beat, but not everybody as it was doen before".

In all periods of the Soviet regime in Russia the investigators of the punitive organs have acted and still act more according to the principle of "revolutionary consciousness" than according to juridical norms. Besides all reasons, mentioned above, this is also explained by the fact that the investigators (i.e. the NKVD operative agetns-representatives) very often have no notion about these norms in general, and if they refer in the end of every case to the clause 206 of the Criminal Code (about the conclusion of the inquest), they do it only because it has been ordered by the office of the Attorney General to do so. They are directed in all their actions by the simple rule that "purpose justifies the means", and if the "enemy" has already been arrested he has to be forced to make his confession by any means. The usual and the most widespread method of the Soviet investigators of screwing real or, much more often, false confessions out of a prisoner, may be briefly represented in the following formula : 1) terrorizing of the prisoner by bringing against him the most phantastic accusations; 2) a systematic exhaustion of all physical and moral strength of the prisoner; 3) arousing hopes and striking of a psychological bargain between the investigator and the prisoner.

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This method ruined the life of thousands and even millions of Russian people. After the war the same method is applied to the new hundreds of thousands or even millions of victims of the Soviet regime in the countries of the Central and South-Eastern Europe. Therefore it deserves to be studied in the most detailed and attentive way.

The authors of this work have interviewed several dozens of persons, former prisoners of Soviet places of detention and concentration camps as well as former NKVD men as to this problem. The picture of the gradual "working up" of the victims of this institution is nearly the same in its principal features though somewhat differs in details. The following method is the most typical :

For instance, the operative agent-representative of the Secret-Political Division of the Moscow regional NKVD administration is ordered to "elaborate" the economist of the Moscow machine-building plant "Sharikopodshipnik", a certain Ivanov. The NKVD has no incriminating materials for this Ivanov, but a registration card has been filled out for him by the special recording as he was seen in the theatre in the company of Petrov, engineer-constructor of the same plant who had been arrested after having told a wit<sup>ness</sup>, connected in some way with the attempt upon the life of Kirov, to other workers of his section. Ivanov was not present then, but owing to this casual encounter in the theatre he was included into the "agentur case" of the "wit-teller" Petrov, who was sentenced to ten years of banishment for his crime. /

By the way, it is worth ~~of~~ mentioning that a wave of arrests, executions and deportations which followed the assassination of Kirov was called by the people "the Kirov recruitment"; a similar wave that followed the death of Kuibyshev - "the Kuibyshev recruitment", and the fearful period of 1936-1938, the so-called "Yezhovshchina", was also defined as "the Great Recruitment".

Thus, the operative agent-representative begins the "elaboration" of the economist Ivanov, who, since this very moment, has been transformed in the NKVD files into the "figurant Ivanov".

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The operative agent-representative makes enquiries in the special section of the plant, and the collected information shows that Ivanov is a painstaking and accurate employee, and that during the whole period of his work at this plant he was never reprimanded by his chiefs. But he leads a very reticent life, devotes all his free time to his family (he has a wife and two children), seldom attends meetings, does not display any enthusiasm at the prospect of a new subscription to the loan, evades social obligations and therefore was recorded as a "passive member" by the trade-union organization. Direct anti-Soviet declarations (criticism of the Soviet regime) were not recorded, but he likes to take from the "Techprop" (propaganda of technical knowledge) American technical magazines, and when the Austrian film "Peter/" appeared on Soviet screens, he made the following remark : "At last we shall be able to see a really good film".

But this scarce information does not disappoint the operative agent-representative. He decides to classify Ivanov with the category of "concealed SOE" (socially dangerous elements) and to "create" the material for his "elaboration". Rehashing the old proverb, the NKVD men say in such cases : "Find the man, and you will find the case".

And so a systematic elaboration begins. Through the secret informers at Ivanov's place of work, and through the "lodging agent" at his place of living the operative agent-representative learns little by little all the details of Ivanov's biography, he becomes acquainted with his character, manners, habits, his circle of friends, his way of life.

Meanwhile the NKVD agencies gathered information at his place of birth and his former place of residence. Similar information was also gathered for his wife. It has been found out that his father had a small grocery shop in Saratov before the revolution, and that the father of his wife was "dekulakized" ("raskulachen") in 1930 and deported to the Kazakhstan steppes for colonization. This information "lawfully" enables the operative agent-representative to consider Ivanov as SOE (socially dangerous element

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(in Russian - "sozialjno opasniy element"), for he has concealed both his and his wife's origin. There are still no concrete accusations against Ivanov, but his "case" gradually swells with these and other "indirect proofs", as Vishinsky calls them. When this case is sufficiently voluminous, the operative agent-representative gets an order for the "detention of potentially dangerous and suspicious as to his connections citizen Ivanov".

At night a car stops near Ivanov's house ... Sleepy and frightened Ivanov, not understanding anything, is roused from his bed. A search is made and Ivanov is stunned by horrifying questions: "Where is the pistol?", "where have you hidden it?", "We know everything, so better confess, it will help you"...

The first task of the operative agent-representative is to frighten his victim with accusation of some most terrific crimes and vicious intentions. Thus, the "working up" of the arrestee begins with terrorizing him. He is brought to the NKVD and is left till morning in the waiting-room jammed with the "night take". Frightened people, not understanding anything, sit or stand around him. While he is still not able to come to his senses, a man in the NKVD uniform approaches him and looking into some papers asks: "You are citizen so-and-so?" The flabbergasted arrestee answers "yes" in a shaky voice and wants to ask why he was arrested, but the man in the uniform mutters: "A fine fellow indeed! It took us a long time to catch you!", -and steps aside.

The legs of the arrestee give way under him. He wants to make the situation clear, he wants to say that he was arrested by mistake, but everybody he addresses, gives the same answer: "Keep silent, it is prohibited to speak here!" In the morning he is summoned for registration, a careful search is made once more, all his personal belongings are taken away and approximately at 10 a.m. he is brought to a overcrowded prison cell.

Immediately he is surrounded by some unshaken, tangle-haired persons in rumpled coats and overcoats. He hears questions: "Why have you been arrested?", "What news are there in the free world?", and so forth. The arrestee decides that he has been put

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into a cell with criminals and timidly clings to the wall. But gradually it becomes known that persons, surrounding him, are also economists, engineers, professors, actors, officers of the Red Army and party workers. He does not put any questions, his instinct of a Soviet citizen tells him that all of them are "enemies" who have been arrested for some real crimes, but he is quite innocent and therefore this misunderstanding will be cleared after the first interview with the investigator. But, of course, he has to shun any contact with these "enemies of the people".

The second stage of the previous "working up" takes place. The arrestee is left in peace, and it seems to him that the investigator has forgotten him. Meanwhile, other prisoners are summoned to the inquest. They are brought back after a long time and in a terrific state. Sometimes they are pushed into the cell being quite unconscious. The new prisoner ( in our case - Ivanov) begins to realize that people do not leave this place, but still he nurses the hope that he will be set free as soon as the "misunderstanding" will be cleared. In the meantime he listens to sad and hopeless tales of other prisoners, who have been arrested in the same unexpected way, but still he refuses to believe them. Gradually all his surroundings create a psychological preparedness for his first interview with the investigator. This preparatory period may be different as to its duration - from one day up to several weeks, depending on the intentions of the investigator and the number of other cases he has at hands at that time.

At last our Ivanov is summoned to the inquest. He is led through long corridors, and on the way he must stand with his face turned to the wall if some other prisoner meets him halfway. He will hear all the time the jingling of a large key, beating against the clasp on the soldier's belt; that is how the warders notify each other that another arrestee is being brought along the corridor, to enable the warder to turn his prisoner with his face to the wall - so that the prisoners might not see each other. But at last he enters the investigator's room. A formal inquest begins, and its purpose is the ascertaining of biographical data

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of the prisoner and his social origin.

"Where were you born, where did you live and work, who are your parents, your grandfather and grandmother, what was their occupation?" - these questions have to be answered in details, day after day, year after year. During this preliminary inquest the investigator studies the prisoner, tries to understand his psychology, and his conclusions as well as the impression, made by the prisoner, will determine the behaviour of the investigator during this first inquest. Depending on them he will be either polite and obliging, treating the arrestee to tea and sandwiches and offering him cigarettes, or will knock with his pistol at the table, swear and shout : "I'll kill you like a dog!"

At last the formal part of the inquest is finished. The investigator came to certain conclusions and he proceeds to the "case" as such.

His first question as to this "business part" has normally such a sense though it may vary as to the form :

"Your attitude towards the Soviet regime?" - whereby he adds: "You have to take into account, that we know everything, and you have to make an open-hearted confession, which will prove your complete loyalty to the Party and Soviet Government. In that case we shall not bring you to the trial. But if you persist in denying your guilt, I shall remind you of the words of Maxim Gorky: "If the enemy does not surrender, he is crushed".

By saying this, the operative agent-representative at once shows the prisoner the general direction - denounce yourself as much as possible. But in spite of this all prisoners usually vow that they are absolutely loyal and are ready to sacrifice their life for the Soviet Power and their leaders.

At this moment of the inquest, the investigator comes down upon the arrestee with all his stock of information collected from secret informers. He tells the prisoner about his intimate friends. He shows that he knows who and when paid any visits to the arrestee, he describes the character of these persons and the kind of relations between them and the prisoner. He may even

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describe the colour of the hair of the girl with whom the prisoner had an affair and he may mention a whole series of the most intimate details of the prisoner's life. But he will not say a word about his anti-Soviet actions or crimes, for his information does not mention any of such actions or crimes. He will only slap the file of the case with the back of his hand, repeating again and again : "You see, we know everything but we would like you to confess sincerely in all your errors. Repent, and we shall forgive you. But if you don't plead guilty, you will be executed as an inveterate class enemy".

Usually, at this stage of inquest such version of the accusation is brought into action which the operative agent-representative ( who is now acting as the investigator) invented and prepared during his preliminary "elaboration" of this man. Such versions and combinations greatly vary, and they may be even of phantastical nature : from an attempt to kill Stalin and other members of the Soviet Government up to an intention to blow up a coal mine. This part completely depends on the phantasy and tastes of the investigator. In such cases the very first inquest begins with swearing, threatening and beating.

But in many cases the investigator does not bring any concrete accusation against the prisoner at the first inquest, but simply mentions several names of persons, known to the prisoner, who have been arrested some time before, and affirms, that they have already confessed everything, and that the NKVD knows about the part of the prisoner in their crimes, but he does not mention the crimes as such. From time to time he only puts some leading questions, provoking the prisoner to choose the necessary version.

But notwithstanding the nature of the chosen version, the investigator leads the inquest in such a way that the prisoner has the impression that he is not considered by the investigator to be the chief culprit, but only a blind tool in the hands of some main persons, who have to be brought to light with the help of this prisoner. Thus, from the very beginning, the investigator gives the prisoner a clue for the future psychological bargain,

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while the form and character of this bargain are determined by the investigator in the course of the inquest, depending on the personal qualities of the prisoner, his education, intellectuality etc.

This first stormy attack of the investigator usually at once sets the prisoner off the rails. He is abashed, he has never expected that all the details of his personal life, his acquaintances and connections, even his own words and thoughts are so well known to the investigator. Nearly every citizen of the Soviet Union has in his past such facts which he carefully conceals from the representatives of the Soviet power. All these facts from his own past or that of his parents, as insignificant as they may be in reality, here, in the investigator's room, acquire in his tormented brain the meaning of a terrible deathly danger threatening to him and to his family. Such a state of mind is explained by the "normal" psychology of the Soviet Citizen, terrorized by constant purges, check-ups, self-criticism etc. and this factor is fully taken into consideration by the investigator.

Some of the arrestees "crack-up" i.e. agree to sign anything suggested by the investigator, already during the first inquest, but in the most cases the first violent attack of the investigator does not give any decisive results, and the prisoner keeps on proving his innocence. In such cases the investigator, sprawling on a chair and smoking one cigarette after another, for many hours will repeat his only requirement : "Speak!". In the intervals he will knock at the table with his pistol, swear, stamp with his feet, threaten with tortures and execution and even beat the prisoner, though it is not always done in the course of the first inquest.

The continuance of the first inquest may vary from several hours to several days. This depends entirely on the investigator, his intentions, the character of the material collected during the preliminary "elaboration", on the version of the "crime", prepared by the investigator, on the impression created by the arrestee, on the physical and moral firmness of the prisoner himself.

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The inquests that lasted for several days were especially widespread in the period of "Yezhovshchina" when the lack of material that had to be collected previously, and the abundance of "cases" did not give any possibility to the investigators to pursue a systematic "working up" of the prisoners, and forced them to try "cracking" the arrestees by means of a single furious attack.

In the case of one of the authors of this work, such an inquest in the Special Division of the NKVD lasted for five days and a half without any interruption.

If such method is applied, after some hours of the inquest, when the will of the prisoner is not yet broken but the organism already begins to lose capacity of resisting owing to the fatigue and nervous strain, the investigator usually leaves with the words : "Stand and think!" Here it is necessary to have in view that during the inquests in the NKVD the prisoners are very rarely allowed to sit. Usually the arrestee has to stand all the time he is in the investigator's room. This necessity of standing for many hours and sometimes even for several days is already a cruel torture in itself, and may break the resistance even of firm people; but the chief purpose of this measure is to bring prisoners to a half-conscious state when they lose control over their answers. Sometimes ( as in the case with one of the authors of this book) the prisoner under investigation is driven to such a state that, being influenced by the investigator on duty, he begins imagining that the latter helps him and proposes the best version for his defence and the best course to adopt in this situation. But this measure is not included into the category of "physical measures for influencing" and represents the "normal" way of the "work" of the NKVD organs. Depriving the prisoner of food and drink during the inquest, or feeding him with herrings not giving any water afterwards, is also considered to be the usual method. To emphasize this measure, the investigator usually puts a carafe with water and a glass on his desk, and amuses himself from time to time by pouring water into the glass and back again into the carafe.

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And so, the investigator leaves. Instead of him some operative worker in a low rank who is on duty, or a student of advanced course of the Moscow School of the NKVD investigators who is on probation, stay with the prisoner. The orderly NKVD man uninterruptedly speaks with the prisoner, using, as a rule, the most insulting language, trying to humiliate and outrage him. The purpose of such a behaviour is to oppress morally and to tire physically the person under investigation not giving him a single minute of rest. If the prisoner, exhausted by sleeplessness and long inquest, falls asleep while standing, the NKVD man on duty wakes him with a new flood of bad language and sometimes by pushing him. So it goes for a long time. Every six hours the investigators on duty are changed while the man under investigation must keep standing and "thinking". For emphasizing this measure the investigator sometimes draws two lines on the wall near the shoulders of the prisoner or on the floor near his feet, and prohibits to swerve from it or to step over them.

At last, on the next day, the investigator appears again. He has slept well and rested, he is cleanly shaven, even sprayed with eau de Cologne. He is quite ready to begin his normal working day. But the prisoner hardly stands on his feet by this time. The investigator usually begins this second half of the inquest with a violent attack, demanding the prisoner to take a seat and write down his testimony as he had time enough to think them over by night. And usually the investigator adds : "Then you can go and sleep". A characteristic detail has to be mentioned here : almost always in the beginning of the first inquest the investigator addresses the prisoner in the second person of plural ("vy"- the polite form in Russian), but later on he replaces this form by a rude "ty" (the second person of singular), and rarely uses other expressions than "villain", "rascal", "fascist vermin" etc. while addressing his victim. He returns to the polite form "vy" only when the prisoner agrees to take a seat and write the required testimony.

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In such case the prisoner is always given tea with sandwiches, and a package of cigarettes or of cheap tobacco is put on the table for his use. All arrestees know about it, and after a cramped cell, swarming with bugs, this tea with sandwiches and the possibility of smoking again turn into such an alluring bait that cannot be resisted by many a prisoner.

Here the investigator applies the following, very typical psychological trick. Before closing the night inquest he comes down upon the prisoner with some horrible and even phantastical accusation, as, for instance, the organisation of an attempt upon Stalin's life, an attempt of blowing up the plant where the prisoner works or something like that. The prisoner is left for the night to "think over" this terrible accusation, that threatens him with a "pass into eternity". In the course of the night the prisoner gets accustomed to the thought of the impending death and all his mental ability is directed upon attaining only one purpose : to avoid this terrible menacing prospect and at least to save his life. If in the beginning of the inquest the prisoner strove to prove his innocence and wanted to be set free, he has only one wish now - to escape impending death and as soon as possible to put an end to this excruciating inquest. His feet are swollen from the long standing, his brains are inflamed and he has almost lost his capacity of understanding.

The investigator takes into consideration such a state of the prisoner and abruptly changes his tactics. He begins the morning inquest in a soothing tone : " Both of us lost our temper yesterday. Each of us was tired. Your enemies have slandered you a lot. But we know that you are not such a bad man. Everybody may make an error. We do not want to ruin innocent people, we want only to know the truth." - The further harangue is of the similar nature but ends with releasing the prisoner from the most terrible accusation while the prisoner is summoned to sign some "trifle", i.e. the testimony of a "disloyal attitude towards the Soviet power", "petty wreckage" etc. Here the investigator adds with a pretended sympathy to the fate of the prisoner : "Nothing particular will be done for that. May be you will be only

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forced to spend a couple of years in a camp. Then the Soviet power will forgive you and you will be free again." After the terrible experience of the last night the prospect of "going to a camp for a couple of years" seems to be almost a blessing to the weary prisoner. Many take the bait of the "compassionate" investigator and ruin themselves and their relatives and intimates.

But if the prisoner is firm enough to refuse signing this "trifle", the investigator uses floods of bad language, and throwing aside all his "compassion" and "sympathy" applies to the prisoner the most cruel "measures of physical influence" in the result of which the prisoner usually loses his senses. Then cold water is poured on him and he is dragged into the solitary confinement cell or back to his ordinary cell, or even to the prison hospital - depending on the wish of the investigator and on the state of the prisoner.

But besides the "physical influence" there is also the following method which is applied very frequently. Being tired out with shouting and having exhausted his stock of curses the investigator declares : "All is finished with you. You are such an incorrigible vermin that there is nothing else to be done with you but to shoot you down. That's enough!"

The prisoner is put into an elevator. He feels that he comes down somewhere. The memories of all his past life pass before his mental sight. But suddenly the elevator stops. The door is opened and the prisoner sees a long corridor, dimly lit by electrical bulbs. Two NKVD men stand by the elevator holding pistols in their hands. The prisoner is ordered to go ahead. Staggering, clinging to the wall, he slowly moves and sees the bullet marks on the corridor walls. The NKVD men gradually fall behind, he hears their steps, echoing hollowly in the stillness of the corridor. ~~Strange~~  
This is an end ...

But no shots are fired. The prisoner reaches the end of the corridor. Again he is put into an elevator and brought before the investigator who meets him with the words : "Well, have you seen? I was sorry for you and thought you might repent. You have wife and children, then think it over once more! We don't stand upon ceremony with the enemies of the people: one, two and ready!"

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Again the horrid accusation of terrorism, spying activities, diversion etc. appears on the stage, then the investigator again has "pity" on the prisoner, and summons him to sign some "trifle" which will cost him only two-three years in the camp. Variations and forms of the methods used by the investigator may be different, but the argumentation is nearly always the same: "Sign this 'trifle' and the accusation of terrorism and diversion will be taken off, as you will show that you sincerely repent in your errors". At last the worn-out man signs this "trifle" and is sent to some concentration camp for 5-10 years.

However, the investigator rarely achieves his purpose in the course of the first inquest though it may last for several days. An opinion is wide-spread abroad that the NKVD investigators can model anything out of the prisoners as if they were soft wax. Such an opinion was created after the "big processes" of 1936-38 but it is quite a wrong one.

These big processes are called "show trials" or "demonstrative trials" in the USSR. But in reality they do not demonstrate anything. Only such "enemies of the people" who "cracked up", capitulated and agreed to be partners of Krylenko and Vishinsky appear on the platform of the Column Hall of the Moscow Union House. But all those who have courageously endured moral and physical tortures simply get a bullet into the napes of their necks and this is done without any pomposity. It is sufficient to mention only the most popular names of those who perished without this comedy of an open trial - the names of Marshals Tukhachevsky, Yegorov, Blucher, Army Generals Kork, Uborevich, Yakir, Admirals Panderzhansky and Orlov, ministers of the government and members of the Central Party Committee and even of the Politburo as Rudzutak, Kossior, Postyshev and others, prominent diplomats as Karakhan and Raskolnikov, and what is more important - let us recollect millions of courageous Russian men whose names and whose very existence remained unnoticed by the foreign correspondents, eager only to find a sensation - millions of patriots and anti-communists, tortured and executed in the secret NKVD places.

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The names of generals Vlassov and Malyshkin, Trukhin and Meandrov who were executed in 1946 without witnesses, may serve as a symbol of all those innumerate army of fighters for freedom who conquered the horrors of the NKVD system.

Thus, this monstrous system of moral and physical violence is not always the winner. More often it is conquered by the human spirit, strong in its hate of all evil, in its love of the good, i.e. by those qualities of the people which the Communism was unable to change in the long thirty years of its complete mastery over bodies but not the souls of the Russian people.

The unknown victims of Stalin's dictatorship lead their heroical struggle against their tormentors for long months, though they are denied all human rights and though they are fully aware of the fact that this struggle leads only to their death. Many lose their strength and firmness in this unequal struggle, sign everything they are requested to, and even turn into obedient agents of their tormentors. But still greater number of Russian people remains firm to the very end in spite of all indescribable physical and moral tortures.

The procedure of a gradual influence of the NKVD investigator upon the prisoner's mind, as described above, is often spun out for many months and even years. It happens very often that one and the same investigator is in charge of several dozens of cases, and as a result of this persons under investigation are called out by him for the inquest once in a way. In 1937-38 it was not infrequent that people were summoned to the first inquest only after 4-5 months of imprisonment, and then they were again forgotten for several months. There were also cases when persons arrested in the very height of "Yezhovshchina", i.e. in winter of 1937-38, had not been called for the inquest until Yezhov himself was dismissed by the end of the year 1938, and then they were set free, "for lack of the body of the crime". These people never learned why they had been arrested and why they had to spend a year in prison. But all these cases have to be considered as exceptions and they cannot be characteristic for the usual methods of the inquest in the NKVD prisons.

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In order to understand the actions of the investigator and of the prisoner in such cases when the investigation is not limited only by the first violent inquest but is spun out for a long period of time, it is necessary to take into consideration the atmosphere of the NKVD prison cell. In the period of great repressions 25-30 persons were crammed into normal cells, designed for four persons. People could sit only by turns, and for the night large wooden shields were brought into the cells and put on the plank-beds across the whole cell. Thus the whole space of the cell was divided into two or three storeys the height of which did not exceed one meter. 8-10 and even more prisoners were placed on these storeys, so that they were lying tightly pressed to each other and filling almost the whole of the cubature of the cell with their bodies. Those who had to lie on the floor under the plank-beds and the first row of shields were in the worst position. In the Moscow prisons these places were called "subway".

Horrid filth, stench from the close-stool, lice, bugs swarming in plank-beds and in the shields, an impossibility of washing, shaving or combing, a thin soup called "balanda" with a piece of bread for dinner and supper, complete lack of news from outside and the agonizing incertitude about the fate of the relatives and intimates, shrieks of tortured men, moans of those who have come back from an inquest, the night calls "without things" for execution and deafening roar of automobile motors that had to muffle the sound of shots in the cellars - all this created such an atmosphere in the cells, in comparison to which even the worst concentration camp seemed like a rest home.

In such conditions the investigator had only to create in the mind of the prisoner a certitude that he won't be released under any circumstances and that death is lurking for him. Such a state of mind was achieved in the result of the most terrible and even phantastic accusation and by means of brutal beatings and tortures during the first inquests. Then, for some time, the prisoner is left in peace. As it is prohibited to speak in a loud voice in the cells, the prisoners talk in a low whisper with each

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other for the whole days, and gradually losing the sense of fear, tell their stories and ask for advice as to their behaviour at future inquests, though each prisoner is aware of the fact that two-three secret agents are normally present among the prisoners of the cell. However, each arrestee tells his fellow-prisoners only a part of the truth - the fear of the investigator is too strong. Therefore, of course, it is impossible to speak about any co-ordinated actions of the inmates of one and the same cell - each of them takes his own risk and acts according to his own plan. The inveterate habit of Soviet people to hide their innermost "I" from the eyes of the strangers is preserved even in the hell of a NKVD cell. The analysis of the conditions in the NKVD prisons is not the purpose of this work, but we are obliged to dwell on the following two points that are of decisive value :

1. Such conditions have been created in the NKVD prisons, in comparison to which any punitive measure (with the only exception of a death penalty) seems to the prisoners a facilitation of their fate.

2. Collective demonstrations, riots, hunger-strikes etc. take place in the prisons of other countries, while in the NKVD prison, as a rule, a duel between the investigator and the prisoner is going on.

Though the circumstances of each separate case may greatly vary, it is possible to state three essential lines in the behaviour of the prisoners, and consequently all political prisoners of the NKVD are divided into three main categories.

The first category embraces those persons who rapidly lose their moral and physical strength, strike a bargain with the investigator, "crack up" i.e. sign everything they are suggested to by the investigator, and in the most cases perish or consent to become NKVD agents.

The second category consists of persons who are strong enough to bear all tortures of the inquest as well as inhuman conditions of their imprisonment, admitting none of the points of the accusation, brought against them by the investigator. Many of them

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perish in the result of false testimonies of ~~themselves~~ other prisoners or friends, colleagues and fellow-workers who have not been arrested but terrorized to bear witness against them. However, a certain number of such prisoners are lucky enough to be released "because of the lack of the body of the crime" after many months of inhuman tortures and at the cost of a colossal strain of their physical and moral strength. Usually they draw this fortunate lot in such instances when the Kremlin decides, for certain reasons, to reconsider the cases of the prisoners.

The third category is the most numerous and the most characteristic one for the Soviet conditions, though such a category cannot be found among the prisoners of any other countries. It consists of persons who rather quickly come to the conclusion that they won't be able to snatch out of the NKVD clutches, and therefore these people lead their struggle with the investigator not for their freedom, but for applying to their cases such a clause of the criminal code in the indictment which seems to them to be the most favourable one. This is approximately the same course of action, adopted by the advocates of other countries when they see the impossibility of gaining a lawsuit for their client. But here is a principal difference : the defenders of obviously hopeless cases concentrate their efforts on the extenuating circumstances in so far as the fact of the crime is beyond any doubt. The Soviet prisoners of the third category have themselves invented for their "cases" such crimes that have never been committed by them, and direct all their phantasy and mental ability to bring the characteristics and circumstances of these "crimes" in conformance with certain clauses of the criminal code that may threaten them "only" with deportation to a concentration camp.

The tactics of this original "defence" of the NKVD prisoners is approximately the following :

On a certain stage of the investigation the prisoner clearly sees that he won't be released, that his conviction has been decided beforehand by the investigator and his superiors. The atmosphere in the cell and tortures during the inquests gradually

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undermine his will for struggle. On the other hand the absurdity of the investigator's version of his "crime" is also obvious to him in all its details. His brain is painfully and strenuously working in the effort of making this version like the truth, but at the same time taking care that the punishment does not exceed "deportation to the camp for 2-3 years". Usually this way is chosen by persons who have been arrested by the organs of the Economic Administration of the NKVD and charged with "diversion", "economic spying" and "wreckage".

Arrestees begin consulting their fellow-prisoners. In every cell there are always several "specialists" as to the Criminal Code, who know by heart the most frequently used clauses of the Soviet Criminal Code and punitive measures involved by them. The prisoner chooses a clause which seems to him to be the most suitable one, and starts working on the details of his "crime" as well as on the general plan of his "confession". When such a plan is made out, the prisoner comes up to the judas in the door of his cell and asks the warder to give him an interview with the investigator for "giving testimony". Such an interview is normally given without any delay. Being brought before the investigator he declares that he has "realized his errors" and wants to "make an open-hearted confession" and therefore asks for some ink, pen and the files of his case.

Having received all this, the prisoner, in the presence of the investigator, begins working at his own case. The attitude of the investigator is immediately changed into the most sympathetic one and the prisoner invariably gets tea with sandwiches and cigarettes or tobacco. The investigator has by that time fully realized all the discrepancies and even absurdities of his version of the accusation, and he gladly accepts the prisoner's co-operation. He is interested neither in the essential part of the "case" as such nor in the punitive measure, but only in the suitable "mounting" or "framing" of the notice which he has to prepare for the session of the "troika" or "Special Council". The rudeness of the investigator's abuses, blows and tortures

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are immediately stopped at this stage, and the investigator puts on a sympathising and even good-humoured mask.

This way is usually chosen by intellectuals and specialists. As soon as the prisoner has started writing his "version", he becomes the temporary master of the situation. In such cases he works without hurrying, trying to prolong his "leave" from the cell and enjoy comparatively human conditions. There are cases when prisoners work at their "testimonies" for a week or even more, and they compile a real scientific work, imbued with formulas and calculations. The investigator does not hasten him, and only attentively watches over the prisoner to prevent him from trying to prove his complete innocence. As long as he "confesses" and does not rebut directly the version of the investigator - the latter will not intrude.

Starting this strange and unnatural "co-operation" with the investigator, the prisoner may pursue different objects, but in the majority of cases he strives to facilitate his fate or that of his family. Under the most favourable circumstances such a "detailed confession" may lead to the appointment of a commission for revising his case. But much more frequently the prisoner "goes" to a camp for several years and all his inventiveness serves only for mitigating his fate to a certain extent and somewhat shortening his prison term. This strange work of prisoners for inventing the crimes they have never committed shows in the clearest way how desperate and hopeless the people feel in the NKVD prisons. In fact, it is the same principle of the Soviet "self-criticism" but amounting to absurdity in prison.

Sometimes the wish to escape from the lousy and stinking cell and to go to the concentration camp acquires the character of a real psychosis. Hungry and weary people begin to paint in the brightest colours the pictures of the Siberian taiga (vast forests) and of rivers, abounding in water and swarming with fish. They can discuss for hours and with the participation of all inmates of the cell, how they will fell trees, build their barracks in the desolate taiga, how they will go a-fishing and cook a

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fish-soup. In their imagination the "correctional camp" of the NKVD turns into the climax of the human well-being, and in order to achieve their deportatation as soon as possible, people compile the versions of the crimes, never committed by them but required by the investigator. Such psychoses, very profitable for the investigator, are sometimes provoked by him through his agents in the cell. A lot of people under investigation, especially former soldiers and officers of the Red Army, try to be deported to a camp as soon as possible, while they are still healthy and strong in order to flee from there. On this account there is even a special saying in the prisons : "I go to the camp, - to the green prosecutor..."

There are also cases when the prisoners try to mock quite consciously at their ignorant investigators. So, for instance, in 1937, an inmate of the NKVD prison invented with all details a story how he intended to sink several ships of the Black Sea navy in Armavir, and the investigator put down all this nonsense, not knowing that Armavir is situated 300 miles away from the Black Sea coast. Only on the next day he saw what a trick was played on him by the prisoner, summoned this prisoner to his room and beat him so that he was more dead than alive. Another "participator of an armed revolt on the Lower Wolga" signed a testimony that he, being the chief of the auto-repairing shop of the MTS (Machine-tractor station), intended to make tanks out of the tractors "Fordson" and armoured cars out of the auto-cisterns in order to secure the success for this "revolt". But more often there are cases when weary and desperate prisoners - this is mostly the case with almost illiterate peasants and workers - ask the investigator to write down exactly what he wants and finds better for them and thus sign themselves their death sentences.

It is absolutely impossible to give a detailed analysis of all methods of the inquest and investigation of the NKVD-MGB in a short chapter of this book. Such an analysis must be a theme for a special work.

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Closing this chapter it is only necessary to point out that the chief weapon of a NKVD investigator is neither the material which has been collected by him during the "elaboration of the figurant", nor the physical measures of influence, but this atmosphere of ultimate despair and complete lawlessness which envelops every prisoner since the very first moment of his arrest, and to which he has been prepared by all his previous life in the "normal" Soviet surroundings. It won't be an exaggeration if we say that the atmosphere of this "normal" Soviet life differs from the atmosphere of an NKVD prison only by a concentration and acuteness of the measures of enforcement as here and there the Soviet citizen has no personal freedom and all his life fate is in the hands of the authorities in power.

The work with the witnesses is of a much simpler nature. The investigator reads to the summoned witness a false testimony of the prisoner, where the latter makes a clean breast of everything. If the witness does not want to say anything that may be of any harm to the prisoner, the investigator declares : "Well, you are such an enemy as he is, even a more dangerous one, for he has confessed and repents openheartedly for what he has done while you want to conceal everything from us".

Having been summoned to the NKVD, the witness cannot leave the premises without the signature of the investigator on his pass. The investigator suggests to the witness to go out into a corridor and think there, while a soldier bids him to stand with his face turned to the wall, and he may be kept in such a position for many hours according to the investigator's order. As a result persons of weak character sign everything given to them by the investigator, only anxious to leave this damned building.

The foreigners often ask : what does the Soviet government arrest such a lot of people for, especially as they are obviously innocent? The usual answer is that it is necessary for the reinforcement of the army of the prisoners who are carrying out the most difficult work without being paid. But this answer does not give an exhaustive explanation of the problem, as the whole population of the Soviet Union is made up of party, i.e. party,

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and gets starvation wages for their labour. And the work of a slave is always less productive than that of a free man, even if his freedom is as ephemeral as it is in the Soviet Union. Therefore, the above question will be more correct if we put the word "why" instead of "what for", used there.

Then the answer will be as following + because being afraid of the people's hatred the Soviet government created a multi-millions army of jailers, who have to arrest, torture and deport millions of people in order to justify their existence, and because there is no organ in the Soviet Union that could stop on a certain limit the signal, received from the center, for liquidating or "purging" that or another group of the Soviet population. Thus the well-known theory of the snow-ball is brought into life. The dictatorship of the Communist party cannot exist without the army of NKVD-MGB butchers, and this army requires millions of victims to justify its existence. This is a vicious circle from which there is no other escape but the making away of both the dictatorship and the butchers in its service.

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# ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS.—Officer designations should be used in the "TO" column. Under each comment a line should be drawn across sheet and each comment numbered to correspond with the number in the "TO" column. Each officer should initial (check mark insufficient) before further routing. This Record and Routing Sheet should be returned to Registry.

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NO.

DATE

25X1A

| TO—            | ROOM NO. | DATE     |           | OFFICER'S INITIALS | COMMENTS           |
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|                |          | RECEIVED | FORWARDED |                    |                    |
| 1. CIA Library |          |          |           |                    | For your retention |
| 2.             |          |          |           |                    |                    |
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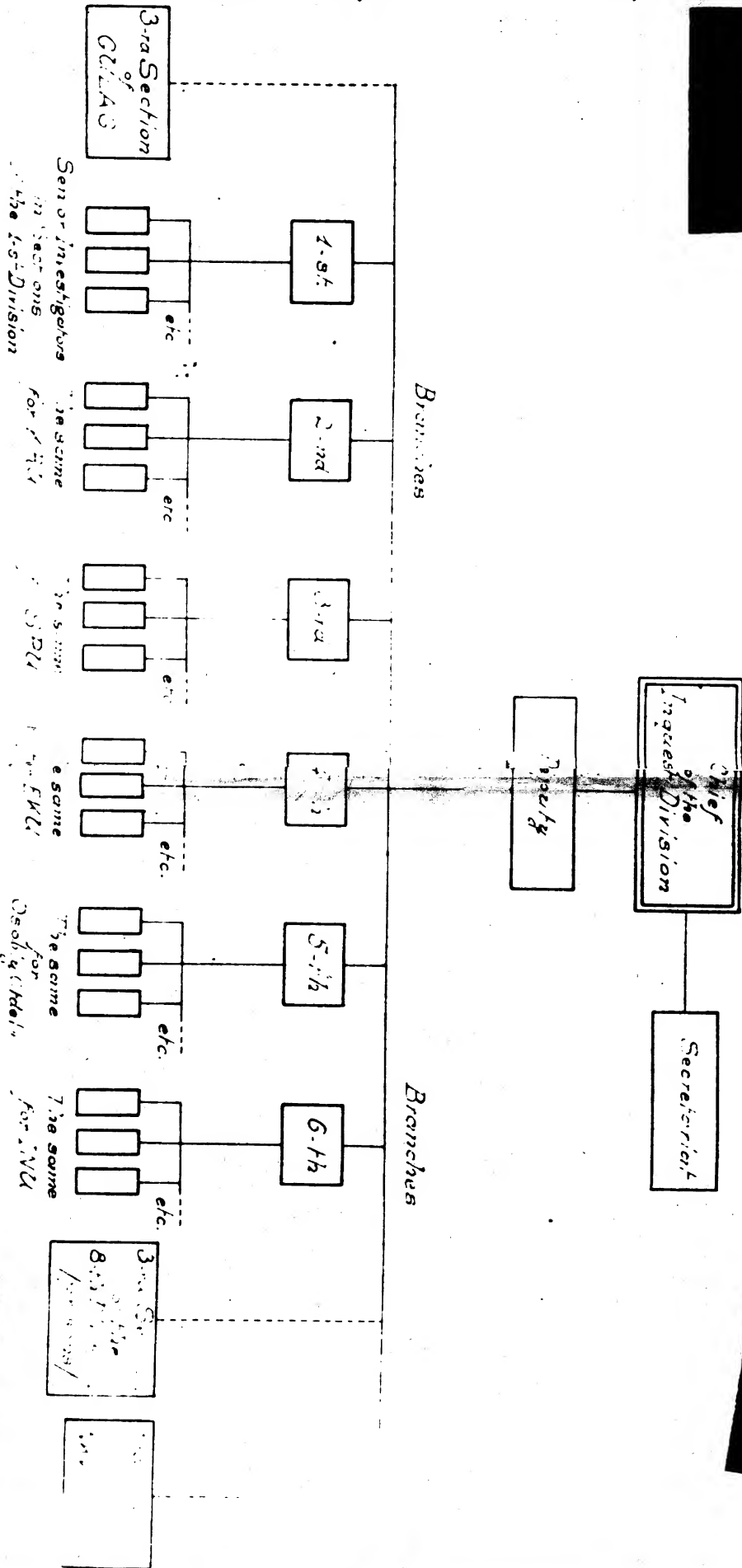
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3-ra Sections of the NKVD Division  
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